

An improvement — but goal famine continues

ALTHOUGH failing to score against an Enfield side that has not won a match since February 9, Wycombe Wanderers can take some comfort from the one point gained at Southbury Road on Saturday. It was just enough to keep them on top of the Rothmans Isthmian League.

Without a doubt, this was an improvement on the match at Woking last Tuesday and over the 90 minutes the Blues were the better of two poor sides.

For a start, the defence had to be tightened up considerably after their previous nervous display. John Maskell looked far happier while Dave Bullock and Keith Mead were solid and secure. Unfortunately this was offset by two poor performances from the fullbacks.

There was also a struggle in midfield for Wycombe but the front three, with Horseman back for Evans, at least looked more dangerous and created more chances than usual.

But despite all this, Wycombe were facing about the weakest Enfield outfit for a decade. A side in the process of rebuilding and with flaws in every department. Until their recent goal drought, Wanderers would have considered themselves to be on another £40 bonus from the sponsors. But not now.

Now Wycombe are having to fight for every point they can get. On Saturday they were brought down to the level of the opposition and consequently the standard of play was eminently poor.

Wanderers' problem seems to be twofold. A general drop in confidence and a similar decline in each individual's standard of play. Every single player is suffering and if it continues, the Blues can say goodbye to the championship and the £1,000 that goes with it.

In their last four games against Oxford, Sutton, Woking and Enfield, Wycombe have failed to score a goal — in fact the longest goal famine since manager Brian Lee took over at the club. It is easy to point out the defects in the side at the moment. What is more difficult is to find the answer to the problems.

So Wycombe must plug on. Fortunes must change sooner or later. Indeed, with a shade more luck at Southbury Road on Saturday, I could be writing of a Wycombe revival in the making.

Several times they came close to that elusive goal — twice through Tony Price — but on each occasion they were out of luck.

It was Price, in fact, who produced Wycombe's first shot at goal on Saturday after five minutes but his left foot drive was well gathered by Tony Wiseman. Six minutes later he went even closer when, after a cross from Mick Holifield, he dipped in a perfect volley only to see Tony Jennings deflect the ball away. Jennings more than once held the home defence together and turned in an excellent performance. No doubt he will be sadly missed by Hendon, from whom he joined Enfield with Derek Baker and Phil Fry earlier this month.

Both sides gave the ball away frequently in the early stages but Wycombe looked the more purposeful and all but took the lead after 20 minutes. Again it was Price and again it was a vicious volley that almost did the trick. Just inside the box the ball came across to the former Leicester

reserve who crashed in towards the net. Wiseman couldn't have seen it and just flung himself to the left hopefully. The ball dipped and veered, striking Wiseman on some part of his anatomy, before being gratefully cleared away.

Enfield made the most of the escape and hit back with two quick corners. But with only two men — Dave Swain and Micky O'Sullivan — upfront, they were woefully weak in attack and their four midfield players merely served to swamp this phase of play. Perhaps the introduction of former Slough and Maidenhead forward Mick Chatterton, who watched the game from the stands with manager Tom Lawrence, will improve their striking force.

With the ball bouncing awkwardly on the uneven surface, Wycombe struggled to string more than three passes together and it took an effort from Dave Bullock to bring Wiseman into action on the half hour. After taking a long throw, Dave was out to curl in a shot from 18

yards, forcing a diving save from the 'keeper.

With former Wanderer Rob Williams and young Peter Carretta giving the visitors' front three a tough time, there were no further chances before the break. Four minutes into the second half, however, Holifield burst into top gear and forced in a rising drive which Jennings again deflected for a corner. From the flag kick Perrin headed home Grant's inswinger but referee Bune ruled that Wiseman had been fouled.

Wanderers continued to have the better of the exchanges and again came within inches of a goal in the 62nd minute. Enfield played the ball dangerously across their own penalty area and Perrin intercepted. Beating Carretta for speed, Steve fired against Wiseman, the ball squirting out to Price. Although failing to get his full power behind it, Price's effort was bouncing towards the corner of the net before Williams blocked the way with his body.

It was a moment of concerted

pressure — something Wycombe had failed to produce throughout the first half. Unfortunately it didn't last long and Enfield hit back with their closest effort of the match in the 75th minute.

Jennings took a free kick which Swain headed on from the 18 yard box. Baker found himself clean through, the defence and prodded the ball towards the back of the net. Maskell was off his line and just managed to stretch himself full length to get a hand to the ball. It was a magnificent reflex save and it kept the Blues in the game.

In an error ridden last quarter, Carretta provided the only bright spot when he made a tremendous run from deep inside his own half. The 19 year old, who has only recently been converted from rugby to soccer, headed away Wycombe's final attack and sprinted on to pick up possession as Wanderers stood and watched. Beating the cover, he ran on and switching onto his left foot, fired a shot past the far post. It was a refreshing piece of individualism.

ENFIELD: A. Wiseman; A. Jennings, R. Williams, P. Carretta, R. Eaton, P. Fry, D. Baker, K. Gaine, J. Grant, D. Swain, M. O'Sullivan. Sub. G. Sedgley (not used).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Wood, D. Bullock, K. Mead, R. Grant, L. Pritchard, T. Reardon, M. Holifield, A. Horseman, S. Perrin, A. Price. Sub. D. Evans (75 mins).

Referee: T. G. Bune (Plaistow).



STEVE PERRIN
... 'goal' disallowed